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Book Review of Does the land remember me?: a memoir of Palestine by Aziz Shihab

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chief sources of legitimacy, or their priority identities” were complementary, not confrontational (p. 9).

This monograph is ideal for students studying political science of or about the Arab Middle East. The detail and knowledge of this work make it ideal for advanced undergraduates and master’s students, especially considering the extensive bibliography.

SEAN SWANICK

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Does the land remember me?: a memoir of Palestine. By Aziz Shihab. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007. Pp xxiii, 149. ISBN: 0815608624.

Aziz Shihab, who died in October 2007 at the age of 80, wrote this volume perhaps as way to explore his complicated relationship with his homeland of Palestine. Shihab, who immigrated to the United States in 1950 after his family lost their home in Jerusalem, became a prominent journalist, and in 1998 founded the Arabic newspaper *The Arab Star* that was published for some five years in Richardson, Texas.

An arresting poem by Shihab’s daughter (the well-known poet Naomi Shihab Nye) entitled “Jerusalem” opens the text. In the forward, Persis M. Karim describes the work as an example of the important stories from the Palestinian diaspora that help this uprooted people to “affirm and support the connection that remains between the people and the land of Palestine” (p. xiii).

The story begins with notice from his brother that his aged mother is dying, whereupon Shihab decides to return to Palestine to visit her for the last time. He recalls how she wanted him to build a red stone house on land he had purchased in their village. She dreamt that he plants trees—and that the land will remember him even when he is not there, as a link to his past. The interplay of the journey to spend time at his mother’s side with other previous visits to Palestine, and with Shihab’s life in America, is woven throughout the work.

There is a recurring theme in Shihab's story of the importance of owning land and the connection between land and its owner. On the other hand, Shihab relates his experience of feeling disconnected to the world three significant times: when he escaped with his family from their Jerusalem home in 1949; when many relatives sacrificed to bid him farewell a year later when he left for America; and when he said goodbye to his cousin Aref in Jordan on his way to the West Bank during this latest trip to visit his family and piece of land.

The author also writes of remembering sometimes forgotten cultural customs related to weddings, dowries, and the favoring of some relatives over others when interacting with his extended family and Palestinians he meets. He is matter-of-fact in relating both his own difficult, sometimes humiliating experiences with the Israeli border guards, even as an American citizen, and describing life endured by Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

This memoir, as a fairly rare example of writing in English about Palestinian daily life, is a recommended addition to public and academic library collections. The title is published by Syracuse University Press as part of its Arab American Writing series.

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Contemporary Iraqi fiction: an anthology. Edited and translated by Shakir Mustafa. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008. Pp 202, with glossary. ISBN: 9780815609025.

Shakir Mustafa, a scholar of literature and Arabic language in the Department of Modern Languages and Comparative Literature at Boston University, has published works on Jewish Americans, literary translation, and Irish drama. This anthology might be considered an introduction to contemporary Iraqi writings in Arabic from various authors and their socio-political perspectives on Iraq: past, present, and in some cases future. He chose authors with different ethnic backgrounds (e.g., Turkmen, Christians, Jews, and Muslims), all writing in Arabic and having a common culture rooted